

Digging the potatoes

The Wecan Coop Community Gardens is for people of all ages.



Families, youth groups and seniors can experience a bit of peace in the gardens, north-east of Edmonton, away from the city.

Over the last eight years the gardeners have received seeds and plants from Hole's Greenhouses to get started. This year 60 families participated in the gardens.

Photos: Leo Campos A.

The Wecan Cooperative Garden is largely self-sufficient. The modest fees paid by the gardeners cover most of the costs of the project. The Wecan Coop sells a portion of its produce to local offices and businesses. These profits are returned to the Coop. Members also share their harvest with organizations such as Bissell Centre and the Edmonton Food Bank. Director Karen Cook says that "many of the gardeners have had to use the food bank at one time or the other. The garden is a way for them to be able to give something back."

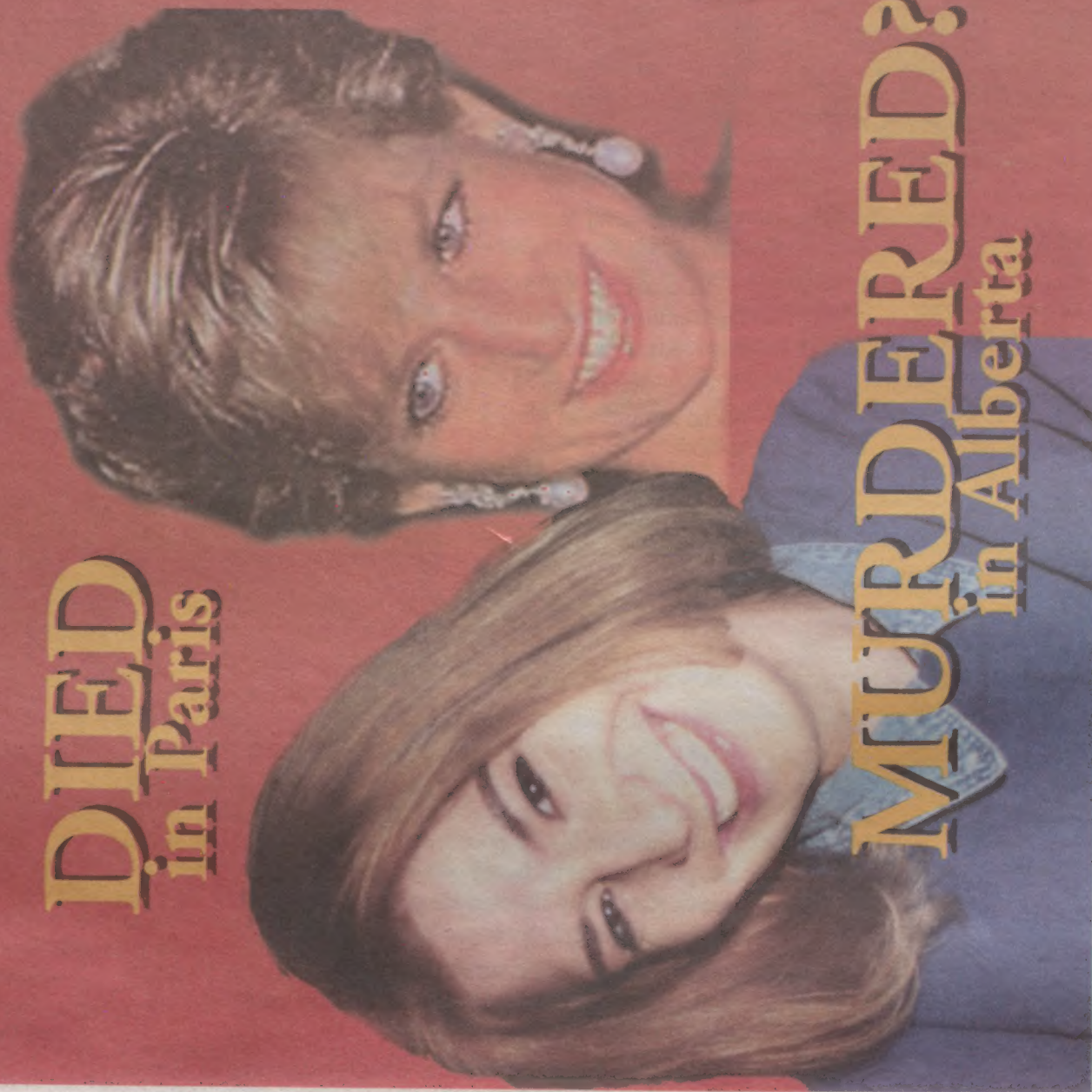


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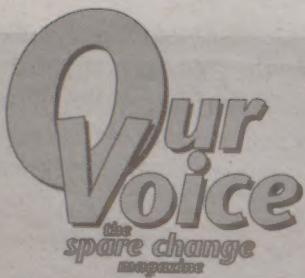
Our Voice

the spare change magazine

DIED in Paris



MURDERED? in Alberta



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OUR VOICE is published to provide an income opportunity for economically marginalized people in our society while communicating about their issues to the public.

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Why?

In June I moved to Calgary from Scotland and am shocked at the number of beggars on the streets of Calgary. Almost every day I am asked if I can "spare any change".

What circumstance leave people without money? Is there no Social Insurance in Alberta or does this get cut-off after a certain period?

Do you have any publications or case examples of the circumstances that leave people no other choice than to beg for an existence?

Regards,
David McDonald

About the budget surplus

About the large surplus the Klein government now has: this surplus was gained on the backs of the poor people of the province. By cutting back on social allowances Klein has decimated social programs which help poor people because he has total contempt for the poor and destitute. The poverty rate in this province has increased over the years Klein has been in power. How many children are going hungry because they are not important and are treated as disposable people?

Klein has gained his surplus on the backs of poor people by cutting away at the social programs at a time when they are needed most.

Here are some statistics about what is happening in Alberta. These stats were taken from the National Council of Welfare,

Poverty Profile 1995. Increases in poverty among families pushed the overall poverty rate to 1.4 percent and the number of poor Canadians was higher in 1995 than it was during the depths of the last recession.

The poverty rate for all non-elderly families in 1995 was up to 15.5 percent. Rising poverty rates among families meant rising poverty rates for children. The child poverty rate in 1995 rose to 20.5 percent, and the number of poor children jumped to a post-war high of more than 1.4 million. In releasing the latest figures, Statistics Canada noted that the incomes of Canadians in general had stalled in 1995 due to little growth in employment and a dip in average weekly earnings after inflation.

As in previous years, families headed by single-parent mothers and "unattached" people or people living outside families were among the groups of Canadians most likely to be poor. Single-parent mothers had poverty rates many times higher than husband-wife families. The poverty rate for all single-parent mothers under 65 with children under 18 was 57.2 percent in 1995. Single-parent mothers under age 25 had a poverty rate of 83 percent. Single-parent mothers who did not graduate from high school had a rate of 82.4 percent. Single parent mothers with children under seven had rates as high as 82.8 percent.

These rates of poverty are horrifying but they will continue until society stops the mean-minded cruel cutbacks to people who are helpless to fight back.

Louise Rusinek
Red Deer

Who are those people on the street corner, and why are they holding up that newspaper? People who don't know the **Our Voice** story are often baffled when they first see the publication being sold on the street. "Is it some kind of religion?"

Our Voice is about basic economics, not religion. And by basic, we mean basic. People who sell **Our Voice** on the street, use the money they make to survive. They sell the magazine for donations, usually in the \$1-2 range, but sometimes more. They paid 50 or 60 cents for each copy, and the difference is their earnings, their profit.

Our Voice is published by three agencies whose mandate is to help the poorest people in our cities: Bissell Centre and Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation in Edmonton and Connection Housing in Calgary. They support the magazine as a means for some people to actively do something to provide for themselves. This is the first crucial step to self-sufficiency.

Many of the people who sell **Our Voice** have pensions or other limited income that doesn't quite make ends meet for them. For them the money they make selling the paper makes the difference between some security, having a little money in their pocket, and being absolutely strapped all the time. For others **Our Voice** is it, their sole means of livelihood.

The other empowering aspect of the publication is that we wherever possible publish work by the vendors who sell it. It is **Our Voice** to the world, our media.

We are always open to feedback and suggestions. Please write or call (428-4001, or Toll Free 1-888-428-4001) anytime. Thank you for your support!

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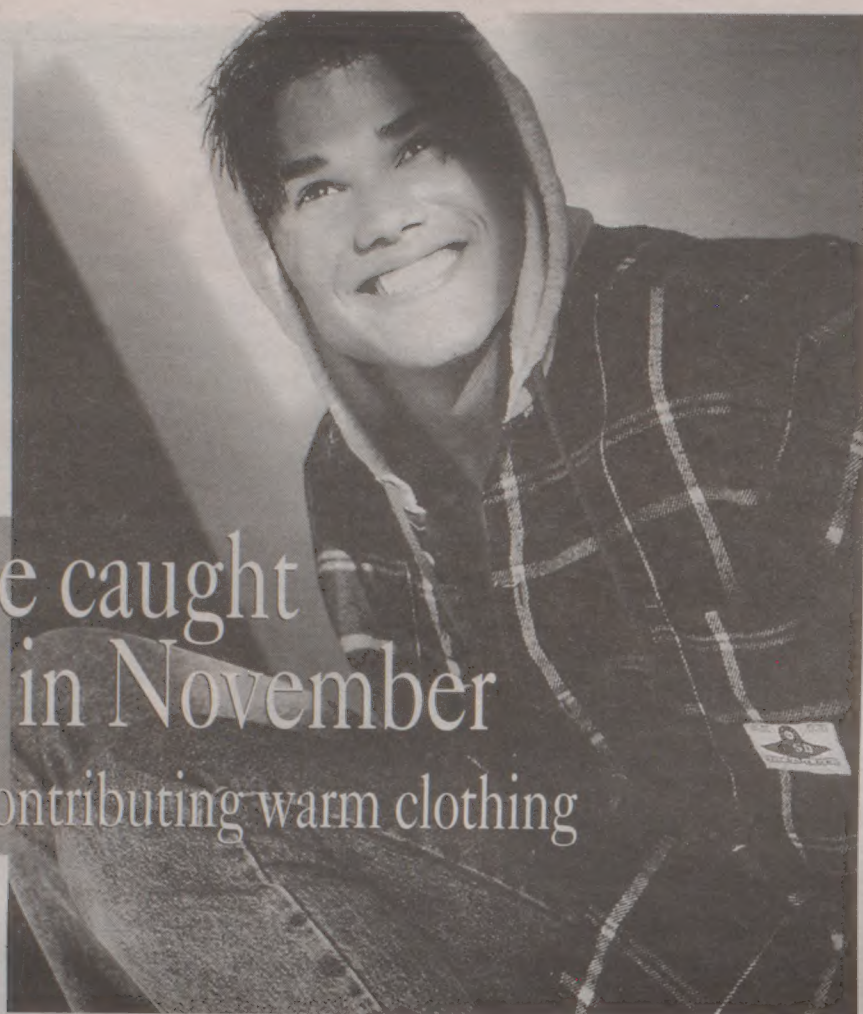
The OUR VOICE VENDOR

Vendors buy their copies of the paper to sell and pay up to 60 cents apiece. (If they buy 50 or more they get a discount). Many vendors start with some copies on credit, and build up to a sizable inventory, that they sell.



Don't be caught coatless in November

Calgarians contributing warm clothing



BY TERRY RAHBEK-NIELSEN

Last fall Old Man Winter caught us all completely by surprise. Coming up into the middle of November the weather was great, our Indian Summer days were lovely, and the nights slowly cooling off. Then suddenly it was November 15 and minus eleven degrees. A week later it was minus thirty-two. Inconvenient, but not unbearable for those who live indoors and drive cars to work.

Those people simply turned up their thermostats, plugged in their automobiles and brought their warm winter clothing out of storage.

Last November many shop owners clapped their hands in glee. New winter clothing sold in volumes. If parents had waited too long to get the kids new winter boots, some had problems finding the right sizes. But the cold

snap of November 1996 was livable for people who could afford it. What about those who couldn't? What was November 1996 like for those who didn't have warm places to sleep every night and a storage room full of winter clothing to choose from?

Everyone in Calgary heard about Ron Beards, the homeless man who lost both his feet to frostbite. The city, and particularly the Bridgeland community, rallied around him. Ron

arrived at the Calgary Drop In Centre one cold night in very bad shape. The staff there insisted on taking him to the Bow Valley Centre. After his discharge from the hospital Ron Beards was presented with an electric wheelchair and a place to live. The problem is, there were many more in this city like Ron Beards. According

Everyone in Calgary heard about Ron Beards, the homeless man who lost both his feet to frostbite. The city, and particularly the Bridgeland community, rallied around him.

to the Calgary Drop In Centre 34 poor and homeless people died in Calgary by November 1996.

How to Help in Calgary

The Salvation Army Drop-Off Box is located at 133 5th Avenue SE. Donations can also be dropped off at any Salvation Army Thrift Store in the city of Calgary. The telephone number for pickup is 287-0001. Items needed: All kinds of winter clothing coats, warm pants, long sleeved shirts. Donations are sorted at the Clothing Recycling Centre or at the Thrift Stores and distributed back to the Thrift Stores for re-sale to people on low incomes, or to the Salvation Army's hostels and family service outlets where there is no charge for those in need.

Donations for the Calgary Drop In Centre can be dropped off at 499 Riverfront Avenue SE, or picked up by calling 263-5707. Items needed: Adult sized winter jackets and toques, socks and underwear for men and women. The Drop In Centre takes donations from individuals and companies and redistributes them back to the Centre's patrons. People in need of warm clothing are welcome visit their clothing room.

Donations for Project Warmth can be dropped off at any of the 35 Fire Halls in Calgary, or can be picked up by calling Signature Valet at 250-1405. Items needed: Warm clothing coats, pants, hats, gloves, and boots for children and adults. They are also in need of sleeping

bags and warm blankets. Volunteer drivers for Signature Valet pick up the articles from the Fire Halls, clean and repair them, and take them to Connection Housing and Family Care Centre for redistribution to families through their office at 60 10601 Southport Road SW, and single people through the downtown Outreach Centre at 409b 10th Ave SE.

How to Help in Edmonton

Coats for Kids

An annual campaign. Drop off clothing at any Page the Cleaners. Men's, ladies and kids coats. Volunteers with Youth Emergency Shelter pick them up and deliver them to agencies. For two days there will be a "SALE" of free winter clothing. For more information 486-7070.

Humans on Welfare

Accepts donations of clothing at 10527-97 Street call 424-87924.

TE Bissell Thrift Shoppe

Accepts donations of all clothing, including winter clothing. Clothes are distributed free with a voucher system through Bissell Centre and W.I.N. House. Call for pick up at 471-6644 or drop off at 8818-118th Ave.

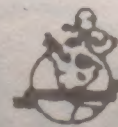
"We saw many people last year with frostbitten fingers and toes, and with their ears blackened by the cold," says Susanna Koczur, Executive Director of Connection Housing. "People died from illnesses like pneumonia." This year agencies that help are getting ready for winter early. As of October 15, the Calgary Drop In Centre on Riverfront Avenue SE will be open 24 hours a day. General Manager Dermot Baldwin says the Centre is in need of warm clothing for adults jackets and coats, toques, boots, and socks. A particular and on-going need is for underwear. The Salvation Army is also calling for donations of winter clothing for men, women and children. Anything people can donate could be a great help to someone else this winter.

"People with the wherewithal to help others should do it," says Tim Fesic, Executive Director of Project Warmth. "A donation can be as insignificant as a pair of gloves." For the person who receives it, it can be a godsend. We are all hoping the El Nino effect will produce a warmer winter this year than last. But then, 5 or 10 below doesn't feel terribly cold when you only have to shovel off a sidewalk, brush off the car, or walk a few blocks to catch the bus. And the skiing is great at minus 15. But for those who have no homes, even a mild winter can be devastating. In many shelters the beds are already full every night. New faces are being seen on our streets every day. If everyone isn't visible by the spring, let's hope it's because they've found work - and warm homes.

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the healing path.*

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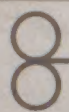
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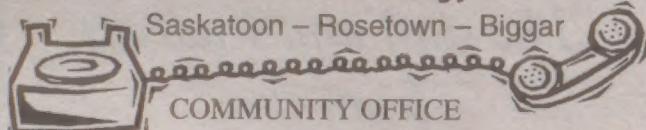
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COLUMN

The image of Princess Diana seated next to a young amputee comes to mind

BY LINDA DUMONT

The death of Princess Diana has left us with the emptiness of a story without an ending. The fairy tale should have ended with the princess living happily ever after. Instead, we are left wondering what she might have become. Her memory takes on larger than life proportions, and somehow we are all too ready to see her in the role of sainthood. Perhaps that is as it should be. If nothing else, she used her position to focus attention on a number of issues. Those whose lives she touched recognized true compassion.

When the possible international ban on land mines appears in the news, the image of Princess Diana seated next to a young amputee comes to mind. She brought land mines to our attention, using the appeal of her public image.

When she was photographed hugging AIDS patients, she sent a message world wide that people who have the AIDS virus can safely be touched. I remembered the first time I was called to visit a man who had full blown AIDS. His face and hands were marred by red lesions. Prayer is a hands-on ministry. I must admit that, being no saint, I hesitated.

Later, he served coffee, and seeing that he had prepared a full pot, I drank two cups.

My daughter, when she saw the television report on the death of Princess Diana, said, "Mom, there was a lady on the news who died. She was a lot like you. She cared about people."

It was nice to think that my daughter would see

me in that way, but I am no princess. I am not like Diana at all. For me, life is an ongoing struggle for survival. There are days when I fall short, when compassion is dead as dust, and I cannot face another need. There are days when I stand, helpless, with nothing to give, facing the recriminations of some disappointed and desperate person. A young mother needed blankets for her children because her house had burned down, a man needed a meal, a friend's family was in crisis. I stood, mute, with no defense, recoiling from the tongue lashing. I had come up wanting with empty hands.

There are those days when I am angry. I see too much injustice around me, and feel sickened by the waste of human lives. A young baby died. She had been born to an alcoholic mother and had fetal alcohol syndrome and other birth defects. Her mother is pregnant again and still drinking, damning another child.

I always wanted to visit a leper colony, I want to go to the killing fields of Cambodia, and to see the people of Davis Inlet, but I am no princess. I can only imagine what it must be like to be able to travel to places of your choice.

I guard my heart, for I cannot allow myself to dream lest I be overcome with grief as I walk a narrow circumscribed walk.

As a commoner I can only gaze with wonder from afar, reading the tabloids and watching T.V. That is, after all, what royalty is all about.

Princess killed Street girl murdered?

The tragedy of Princess Diana's death is possibly the largest shared experience of humankind ever. How many billion people watched the funeral? In Alberta the tragedy of Cara King's death went relatively unnoticed, after her body was found in a field outside of Edmonton. How could there be such a huge difference between two women? One was a princess, one lived the life of the streets. But what a difference. Can one person be so much more noteworthy, or just worthy, than another?

Her "station in life" gave Diana, as a celebrity, the opportunity to draw attention to good causes. Her station in life was something Diana was born to. Cara King's "station in life" was as different as you might get. But her plight was like one of the good causes Diana could have taken up. Ill and vulnerable, Cara was a victim in our world. Addicted to cocaine, medicating for the pain of her mental illness, Cara did what she needed to do to get by. Yet there is a lingering tendency to blame Cara for working as a prostitute, for taking the risks, for living the life that put her in a position where someone likely murdered her.

There is a simple way of looking at Cara's position, however. If a person goes off into the woods in the dead cold of winter, and doesn't take good clothing or equipment, they could easily die. They are taking unreasonable risks, being foolhardy, and you would have to hold them responsible for their own fate. But if they go off into the woods and run into a maniac who kills them, is that their fault? No, their death is on the head of a murderer.

We do not know how Cara King died; police have been unable to determine that. But they are treating it as suspicious, and there is every likelihood she was murdered. Cara King did not take care, probably she was just unable to take care. But if someone murdered her, then they are responsible for this tragic death.

Princess Diana's death and Cara King's death are so vastly different. In the end, however, in each case, one woman, a person, died.

Keith Wiley



September: a month in which our world focused on death

First there was Princess Diana, then Mother Theresa, both lived caring and helpful lives. Here at **Our Voice** magazine we were concerned with the tragic deaths of Cara King, a mentally-ill woman whose body was discovered in a field outside of Edmonton, and Paul Kacan who was brutally murdered in his own home. Paul was a very vulnerable and disadvantaged young man who at times sold **Our Voice**.

Readers of this magazine probably never expected to witness words about or photos of Lady Diana, the photogenic Princess of Wales grace our economically priced pages. We however are quite accustomed to dealing with the unpredictable. Of course this publication has tried to relate at a more intimate level with poverty than it has with royalty.

Princess Diana does however deserve to be noted for her large contribution to her many humanitarian pursuits. She was someone who had enormous opportunity to help people in need and she took advantage of that with utmost nobility. At the same time we realize that she was born into her wealthy circumstances and high profile. We find it extremely difficult to value her life more than we would the lives of Cara King and Paul Kacan. There is no human life more important than another.

Mother Theresa, well-she was Mother Theresa. Helping others was her existence and her life will most definitely be cherished.

This would be a good occasion to reach out with appreciation to all of those people, across the world, who wake up each morning and trek out to help those who may be less fortunate than they. They are the people who work with the poor, the sick, the disabled, those whose lives have been devastated by war or natural disaster and so forth.

This magazine is a humanitarian endeavor and can certainly recognize the value of people who give their lives or even parts of their lives to make the world a better place for the people who are trapped in abject poverty and constant struggle.

So without disparaging the lives and deaths of two very important and compassionate people, we should pay homage to all the nameless, faceless people who give the same selfless efforts, but with far inferior fame and resources. These are the people who try to ease the pain and strife in the lives of those like Cara King.

They struggle on and on to assist people who seem trapped in hopeless patterns that are impossible to eradicate, but whose lives are still valued on the same level as any other person who walks this planet. Here's to these people who work hard to try and gain an understanding of the negative and detrimental forces that people are often faced with, in hopes of making the world a better place for everyone, and not just for some.

Michael Walters

BEYOND GROWTH

TWO VIEWS ON A RECENT ALTERNATIVE SUMMIT

MARY JANE BUCHANAN

A breath of fresh air blew through Edmonton last week; air that tells us success is about more than making money, that growth in our society should be about more than the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Thanks to the Edmonton Social Planning Council and Citizens for Public Justice, the people who attended the two-day BEYOND ECONOMIC GROWTH Conference hope to blast a little of this air through the main Alberta Growth Summit through Betty Hewes' Social Economy platform.

The question is whether this wind is really a fresh one or simply the kind of talk that gets blown around even by do-gooders when the smell of money comes our way? The Alberta Growth Summit is supposed to be about how to split up the juicy pie of an economy that has apparently occurred after years of budgetary restraints. The BEYOND ECONOMIC GROWTH sessions were to provide a forum for discussing how our views of growth and development need to broaden out to the place where social justice, caring and cohesiveness are valued as highly as boosting the average income. But as I sat and listened to Linda McQuaig and others talk about how the government must "reinvest" in social programing, education and the environment, I began to wonder if this was really a new paradigm at all or simply a re-iteration of the "money will fix everything" approach that has been embraced by Premier Klein, albeit for apparently less altruistic purposes. It seemed we still weren't getting at the question, "So if money isn't the only thing we need, then what is?"

Not surprisingly, part of the answer came from a woman attending the conference who is living on social assistance herself with several young children to care for. "Ask me what counts? It's money that counts, when it comes right down to it. I may have way more personal resources than the man in the suit with a big income—I bet my self-identity is way stronger than his, and I know how to cope with things he couldn't begin to deal with. But the reality is, he gets recognized and I don't." A similar concern was echoed throughout the conference: "How can we change the system so that people living on low incomes, the disadvantaged, have more of a voice in our society?"

Then former Edmonton mayor Jan Reimer threw a bit of a wrench into the discussion by asking, "Did you know that those from the bottom income bracket in our province usually vote the same way as those at the top?" Phew. That was news to me and apparently to most of the people in that Coast Terrace Inn meeting room. If the economically disadvantaged in our province actually voted for a party that puts financial wealth ahead of human and social priorities, what does this say about our ability to value the characteristics in ourselves described by the welfare mom in that room—namely, resourcefulness, dignity, and efforts at decent human relationships? These things are worth more than the whole of the Canadian GDP, and yet it seems we have somehow looked past them to judge our worth only by the relative poverty or affluence of our bank accounts.

It occurred to me as I left the room: What if we could learn to value our contributions on the human scale? I would be proud of being a low-income earner who invests a lot of time with her children. You would be proud of the efforts you make to sort out disagreements with family members or friends. We all would celebrate the kind of generosity of spirit that caused an elderly street person to offer a wish for prosperity to Jan Reimer after she lost the last election. "Prosperity," mused Ms. Reimer, "means to flourish or to thrive"—something which we will be able to do only with a whole lot more of this kind of fresh air.

Mary Jane Buchanan is a writer and social activist in Edmonton.



SUSAN ALFRED-WALCOTT

People are afraid of accountability and our society is in a crisis, keynote speaker, economist Robert Theobald told the Beyond Growth alternative summit held in Edmonton recently. There is a decline in ecological, social, economical and moral standards, Theobald said. The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer and the middle class are getting squeezed.

Many speakers at the conference spoke about how the people are the main factor in economic development because their needs and lifestyles are affected.

Two writers attended the recent BEYOND GROWTH conference in Edmonton, an alternative to the provincial government's GROWTH SUMMIT. Here are their views on the alternative summit.

Some questions arising out of this process for me were: "Why was not everyone represented equally? Where were the aboriginal people? Where were the people of colour (black)? Are we really putting people first? Are we empowering people or destroying them? Are we encouraging them to be self-reliant? Are we equipping them with skills for life?"

If we are addressing these issues, why are our children dropping out of schools? What do we have in place for those who do not desire to go into university? Are we slowly driving

them into substance abuse?

If this is about building healthy communities, why are 65% of those in prison aboriginals? Are we teaching racism behind closed doors or are we extending our hands out to embrace them and let them know we care?

People should be allowed to be a part of this process because they are the ones that would be affected. Finding solutions for community well-being is a long term commitment and must be driven by the people for the people. Let us be facilitators of positive ongoing change of helping people to help themselves as we go forth into the 21st century.

Let us encourage not discourage, let us push up, not trample down, and let us liberate and let people be responsible for their own lives. There is a fundamental change taking place and it can't be stopped, but if we work together we all can be a part of it. Are we going to sit back and let our society die or are going to join hands and link our lives by embracing everyone despite colour, race or status?

Economic growth is not about only creating jobs, but it is also about what kind of society we want to live in. As Linda McQuaig said 'by cutting taxes, we limit the ability of government to provide broad-based programmes that benefit everyone. Overall, the rich would benefit most from tax cuts. It would be redistributing resources from the poor and middle class to the rich and thereby creating far less viable communities.'

Susan Alfred-Walcott is a Project Co-ordinator (Trinidad & Tobago) and a participant in the 1997 International Women's Exchange Programme, co-hosted by the Caribbean Association for Feminist Action and Research



Founding conference for the Street Newspaper Association

Street newspapers serve homeless people living in poverty across USA

"In San Diego," the young woman, Shelly Phegley, explains, "there are over 20,000 homeless people." The land of gorgeous golf courses and bright white beaches, has hundreds of people sleeping in the streets every night.

The same is true in Santa Monica, Santa Cruz, San Francisco, in Seattle and across the United States.

Shelly is starting a "street newspaper" to work with homeless people, to give them some way of working for money. It will be a publication where people can tell their stories, the news as they see it, and advocate for themselves. She is young, working with her husband, a graphic designer, both terribly energetic and putting in all their time on the project.

Shelly is just one of nearly one hundred street newspaper people at the founding convention of NASNA, the North American Street Newspaper Association, in Seattle in September. Street publications sold by poor and homeless people, many of whom would otherwise simply be begging desperately, have begun in many major American cities. Hundreds of vendors depend on selling **Street Wise** in Chicago which publishes 120,000 copies every month. **Street News** in New York, is the largest newspaper, with the most pages, and packed with some of the smallest type, but after many years of struggle, it is kept alive by the total commitment of one man, John 'Indio' Washington. **Street News** started in 1989 and was the inspiration for the street newspaper movement around the world.

Montreal, Victoria and **Our Voice** were the Canadian publications at the conference. The Americans had a sense that ours is a country of more social justice than their own. "The difference is that we have a military budget," explained Lee from Boston, laughing. "And you have social programs."

Bridget Reilly is at the conference and she has brought along copies of her Houseless Journal newsletter, a very personal story of living in a

camper on a truck in Eugene, Oregon. "My court date for illegal camping is coming up September 22, and my truck is parked in a church parking lot until after that, I hope," says Sandra. Illegal camping, loitering, sitting on sidewalks, public parks... every city has a similar story of new laws that attempt to control homeless people and, if possible keep them out of sight and out of mind. The street newspapers, and people like Sandra, are campaigning against the laws and against the police harassment of people who are simply out on the street, by no choice of their own.

So, Bridget will have to move her truck in a couple of weeks, and she could get a fine, which she can't possibly pay. "Did I explain that the truck doesn't run, it hasn't started in months," she adds. "I have to get people to push it or tow it. And I don't have a valid driver's license and it's not registered in my name, anyway. But it's the same place to sleep. I can keep all my stuff and I'm not off to a different bed in some shelter every night." She has a volunteer lawyer who will fight her plea of not guilty on constitutional grounds.

Bridget isn't too confident about beating the charge. Another Eugene woman just finished a complete round of court appeals, as high as she could go, and lost in the end. That was when the police, who had been holding back to see if the law would hold up, went out ticketing people like Bridget. Perhaps people and churches will come through and help Bridget pay the fine. Or she may go to jail for her crime, but after that she still will need a place to park her truck.

She explains that she's actually quite comfortable in the camper, and at least she owns her "home" and doesn't have to pay any rent. "They're going to make you pay, one way or another," chips in Lee, as Bridget tells her story.

Keith Wiley

Our Voice editor Keith Wiley attended the NASNA conference. Readers may recall that we were seeking AIR MILES to send more people, but it was not possible given AIR MILES regulations. Keith's flight to Seattle was made possible by a scholarship raised by the National Coalition on Homelessness in Washington.

A sad story untold

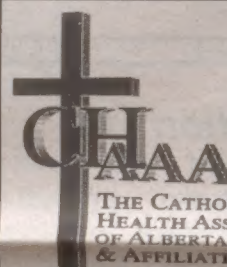
Police in Santa Barbra, California may have gone too far in moving homeless people out. They ticketed a homeless woman for sleeping in public places more than once. She couldn't find a safe place to sleep anymore. Her nearly naked body was found one morning, just outside city limits. Her achilles tendons had been cut and she had been bludgeoned to death. The police ticket for illegal camping was found on the ground near her body. Police have charged a homeless man with the murder, but are not talking at all about their role in her death. People are calling the radio stations, saying "we want the homeless people back in, sleeping in the parks and under the street lights where they can be protected."

The news of the murder did not make national headlines, and wasn't on the TV. The news media are censoring the story about the crisis of people in poverty, about homelessness in America. It's not happy news, it's there every day, and it doesn't fit their marketing plan. We need real newspapers to tell the truth, says one journalist who is urging other newspapers to carry the story of the Santa Cruz woman's murder and tell the shocking story that is the truth about conditions for homeless people.



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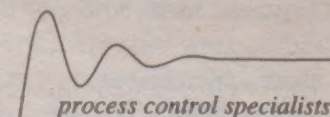
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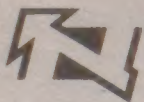
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Why di

Cara King's mother, Kathy King, was the **Voice** to ask the police to find her daughter. She was missing for nearly a year. Later, writer Kathy King contacted Kara King's story, and after just days later, she found a field, east of Calgary, burying her daughter. She went ahead with the interview. She found her daughter's story.

"I was sitting in my dining room when I noticed two very official-looking fellows walk up to the house. I knew that was it. It was Cara that they'd found."

Chills crawled up the spine of Kathy King every time she heard that a body had been discovered somewhere in or around the city. This time, September 2, it was the end of four years of agonizing uncertainty over her daughter's life.

Her daughter had died, most likely murdered.

The body of twenty-two year old Caralyn King was discovered by a farmer in a field just west of Sherwood Park in late August. The cause of her death has not yet been determined. A police spokesperson revealed that autopsy results were inconclusive. She had been in the field so long that she needed to be identified by her dental records. Police have mounted a very active investigation, tracking men who frequent the inner city for sex, and tracking leads to turn up someone who may have killed Cara.

"I have certain mixed feelings. I feel tremendous sadness because I've lost a daughter and I feel sadness for the difficulties she's suffered in her life, but I also feel a sense of relief to know that finally her pain is over. Maybe she has found peace, after all that she's been through," says Cara's mother.

Cara had been working the streets as a prostitute, the most dangerous way possible to live. Suffering from mental illness, and addicted to cocaine, she was very vulnerable and at risk. Crossroads, an outreach program for prostitutes had Cara signed up on their high risk voluntary identification registry that is used by police solely for identifying bodies.

"The mental health people wouldn't want anything to do with her because of her addictions and the addictions counsellors didn't want to deal with her mental health issues. The poor thing had nowhere to go," her mother said.

Even Crossroads had difficulty helping Cara. Her mental health problems made her hard to reach and hard to help.

As well there were no support residences for the mentally ill that would house her beyond evaluation. Even though she did suffer from a drug addiction which was driven by

schizophrenia, she was in a bad situation.

"All I really wanted, she was someone who could help her, was someone who could help her, no one," says her mother.

This is a problem for people who live on the streets. They are incapable enough to recognize their situation, but at the same time they are far from functioning. They can care for themselves.

Cara was working the streets, growing drug habit. It was a comfort in cocaine that she found elsewhere. She spent a lot of time at the Women's Emergency Shelter, which is a safe haven for women in Edmonton's inner city.

Like many girls working the streets, a confused and vulnerable many, Cara had experienced



MURDERED?

Did Cara King die?

King's mother called **Our** to ask about a story to help her daughter who had been missing for months. A few days later writer Michael Walters contacted Kathy King to do a story and an interview was set up. Days later a body was found in the east of Edmonton. After seeing her daughter, Kathy King went ahead with this exclusive interview. She wanted her mother's story told.



she was refused accommodation, since I couldn't help anyone who could. But there was no mother.

problem for many people who are not considered. They are not considered enough to require supervised housing. The reality is that they are functioning at a level where they are not for themselves.

working the streets to fund her habit. It seemed she found a place that she wasn't able to find. She spent a lot of time at the Emergency Accommodation Center, a haven for women in the city.

girls working the streets she was a vulnerable young lady. Like I experienced violence from



her customers. Finally it appears that someone very brutal came along and killed her.

"I feel the most anger toward the Johns and the drug dealers. Mostly the Johns. They are the guys who live among us, the faceless people who stop for their sex on their way home or to their next meeting. They're the ones who fund the whole underground scene. They keep prostitution and the drug trade vibrant. They all should bear some of the responsibility for what has happened," says Kathy King.

"I know for a fact that some guys look for girls that are high or junkies 'cause they're easier to take advantage of," said another girl who has worked the streets for the past seven years.

"We're all gonna die anyway. Cara's dead, I'll die, you'll die, big deal. That's the way it is. I'm not afraid to die and I don't think Cara was either," said the veteran of Edmonton's streets.

"Cara lived a life and died a death that no one deserves." Cara's uncle Cecil King read from her eulogy. "The best tribute we can give her is to remember her in happier times."

Riding horses, running a stretch with the Olympic flame in 1988, Cara's life had been a lot like that of many active young women.

Cara was born December 28, 1974 in Edmonton. From the time she was able to walk and talk, it was quite evident that she was a very independent and opinionated little girl. Cara lived the life of a normal child. She was very active in terms of developing relationships with friends and cousins her age.

Some of her greatest moments were spent on her Grandparents' farm in Vermillion. This is where she found a love for animals and the outdoors.

"I remember when Cara was three years old, she came into the house at the farm after spending hours just sitting on a hay bale. She came in and said 'I love farming,'" recalls her mother.

She became absorbed with ballet, gymnastics and horses. It was equestrian events and horses that proved to be Cara's true love. She'd spend hours riding and jumping her horse around the farm. She competed in many equestrian events.

"Cara always had a strange mixture of friends. She hung out with normal kids from normal families, but she also met people from another part of life. They were kids who liked to party and were wild," Kathy said.

By the age of sixteen, Cara was thoroughly involved in experimenting with alcohol and drugs. She became quite partial to the night life and all that it involved. She started going to the bars - bars which were filled with under-aged kids.



She would bring friends home, drinking and partying, at very late hours. These friends would steal from her purse, says Kathy. They left Kathy faced with threats of eviction from her apartment, because of the drinking episodes.

"It breaks my heart to realize that a lot of what was wrong at that time wasn't directly Cara's fault, but was a result of her choice in friends," said her mother.

Finally when Kathy came home one day to discover that someone had attempted to break through the lock she had installed upon her bedroom door, something had to be done. Cara was asked to leave if she wouldn't report the friend who had tried to break into the bedroom to the police. She wouldn't, so she moved out with continued financial support from her mother.

Cara promptly disappeared. She experienced her first taste of life on the streets.

Cara wasn't found until someone she knew spotted her "working" by the China Gates in Edmonton's inner city. Her mother was able to convince her to return home.

Cara said very little about what had happened to her in those two weeks, other than that she had been kidnapped.

She came back home and resumed going to school at St. Josephs, where she was enrolled in the Beauty Culture program. But even though nothing was said, Kathy could feel that some terrible things had happened to her daughter during the time she was missing.

Cara had long struggled in school and found it hard to envision a future for herself. A few years earlier, Kathy had married a man Cara could not live comfortably with. Today, Kathy describes him as a very rigid and mean fellow who would not accept Cara as his own child. It turned into an immense power struggle between he and Cara.

"I feel bad in retrospect that I failed to recognize how detrimental that relationship might have been for Cara," Kathy said.

When Cara was thirteen, Kathy and her new husband had moved the family to

CONTINUED...



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MURDERED?

Why did Cara King die?



CONTINUED

Nova Scotia. There, Cara's mental health began to deteriorate.

"She no longer exercised proper judgement and had no appreciation of consequences. She lacked the ability to plan or to defer gratification. Everything became focused on the now. She could no longer make intelligent or sensible decisions," Kathy said.

"By the time she was fifteen she became virtually catatonic. She refused to eat for fear of her food being tainted with poison or pieces of glass. She thought everyone was out to kill her or harm her in some way."

She was hospitalized three times while living in Nova Scotia at the age of fifteen.

"The emotions she expressed were never appropriate and were often tremendously over reactive. She no longer had control over herself or her life," said Kathy.

Cara was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. She was subsequently prescribed anti-psychotic medication. Just before Cara's sixteenth birthday, her mother brought her back to Edmonton.

Cara left home for good at the age of eighteen. She continued to receive support from her mother who doubted Cara's ability to survive on her own.

"She didn't seem to have the ability to choose the adult lifestyle. She was caught between two worlds. She couldn't compete in average society and still she couldn't survive on the streets," her mother said.

Cara's mental health problems left her feeling alienated from the friends and family she'd lived with most of her life. She reached out to find her own sense of belonging. She tried to fit in and was attracted back to the streets. Cara moved whole-heartedly into the party and drug scene.

"Drugs at that time really fit Cara's person-

ality," says her mother. "It gave her that immediate gratification that she always longed for."

Cara lived with various friends, and at a seedy hotel for some time. Her mother tried to encourage her toward treatment and rehabilitation. Every now and then, Cara was open to her mother's help, but she always turned back to the street.

At the age of twenty Cara became pregnant. Her health was put on hold for the benefit of her unborn baby. The doctors feared her anti-psychotic medication would be detrimental to the fetus. For two months she lived with a baby growing inside of her and without the medication she relied upon to maintain some level of sanity. Kathy said she was eventually compelled to abort the child by her doctors.

Off her medication Cara went back to the street, back to cocaine and back to the hazards that finally cost her her life.

Cara King's life was challenged and tragic in ways that go beyond what most people can even fathom. What could have been done differently to save the life of this pretty young woman? Maybe the mental health system could have been more sensitive. Maybe the addictions counsellors needed to do more. Maybe we can blame it all on the Johns. Maybe it was her choice in friends at a vulnerable age or period in her life. Maybe it was fate. Maybe it was a combination of all of these things.

None of this will change the fact that a twenty two year old girl with mental illness has unjustly died. For her mother, who tried to give Cara a healthy, normal life, it won't bring her daughter back.

BY MICHAEL WALTERS

POETRY

Touch me Gently

Touch me gently.
Guide me wisely
into your loving arms.
Extend your strength-
Sharing your vision
of what you can see.

Take me shamelessly,
guiding my eyes to look
upon the view
above and through the obstacles
into eternity.

Love me tenderly
completely and whole.
Love me always.
Assurance that you've come
with peace, dignity
and what will you offer?

Walk with me
together toward the stars.
Dance beneath a rising moon,
your body bending like grass
in Chinook wind
or lie in alpine meadows
among wildflowers.
Naked of pretense or lies.

Hear my voice
as I whisper to your heart.
I've loved you forever
it seems.
Accept my gift,
my love always
beyond

By D.Y.

Searching

Belief in a destiny is impossible to accomplish
Unrelated dreams taken to the edge of the Earth
Reaching out for mortality.
Unfound reality.
Personal demon pulling the strings of a puppet.
Unable to believe our own neurosis.
Realizing the realistic pain of the impassable mission.
Running from mankind.

by Kam

Your Pleasure... My Pain

You left my body bloody and bruised
and you took pleasure from my pain.

Blackness falling in the dead of day
as you wrap your hands around
my slender throat
stretched beyond the fears.

A silent scream gets lost
in the stiffening heat
as you cover my mouth with a rag
full of you,
full of blood.

Who's blood!
My blood!

Puss seeps from my pores
into the ground
as I know the pleasure
you feel through my pain.

Life is taken away
from me
so your pleasure
can be my pain.

by Lee Davis

Fear on the street: Story of a mugging

The day I went to Santos and sang songs was a Thursday. When I was ready to leave I went down to 95th and 110th Ave in Edmonton to see Don, the caretaker, to see what he wanted. When I came around the corner of 95th Street I stopped and a guy with long black hair said come and I turned around and started running around the corner and was attacked from behind. He kicked me in the back and rolled me over and took all my money and a little telephone book that was black.

I think this is wrong for him to do this to anybody else. A little girl and cab driver came over to ask if I was OK. I said, "get the police for me." I think that we should do away with these people who roll people for drugs or money. I think we all should take a stand on welfare day for these bad people who take us for a ride. I wish they could find their ownself a job in the city. The police have to step down on these guys a little more. Where is the justice in this city? If this guy would come forward to the police, I could rest, but I cannot.

Anonymous.

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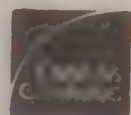
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Our Voice



WORDS ON
THE STREET



TOP LEFT: friends gather at the Neighbourhood Patrol barbecue. **ABOVE:** Patroller, Grayson Scheidle, **LEFT:** Poster at the barbecue. **PHOTOS:** John Zapantis

Neighbourhood patrols help the neighbours to "feel comfortable" on their street

BY JOHN ZAPANTIS

Grayson Scheidle is a clean-cut young man who could easily be mistaken as a grad student out of academia. But out on patrol at night, Grayson is a volunteer who is doing what he can to keep his community safe. He's part of the Alberta Avenue Neighbourhood Patrol that goes up and down the community along Edmonton's 118th Ave.

"I report anything suspicious that I see, if somebody is going around a house, for example," says Grayson. "I write down a person's description and I call it down to the office, and if we feel it's necessary we relay that to police." Grayson also helps out knocking on doors to help find new recruits.

Grayson met up with some 50 other patrollers at a recent appreciation barbecue for the team. "We look for ways to make people feel safe," Gord Stamp told the patrollers. Gord initiated the Patrol in the community. "People feel comfortable with the patrol. We talk to people and they feel safer," he says.

The patrol does not enforce laws but report any crimes or suspicious activities to the police. What patrollers have done includes reporting stolen vehicles abandoned on side streets to helping to prevent physical assaults. There are 16 Youth Ambassadors who work on the patrol, along with up to 40 volunteers.

"I originally got into it for the exercise," says Lisa Wickman, another volunteer on the patrol. "I've always had a very negative view, until I actually spent time in the neighbourhood. I like what I'm accomplishing and I'm proud to be part of it."

Grayson Scheidle is amazed at the feedback the Patrol has received from the many people who live in the Avenue community. "It taught me that people really appreciate a sounding board," he says. "It makes them feel good that somebody is listening and trying to get something done about it." The experience fits in well with Grayson's plans, he wants to go on to training for the RCMP if he can.

Heard it yet? NEWS OF THE WORLD

Spiderman speeds, Batman cracks up

It's been a week of mixed fortunes for superheroes. In Wiltshire, Spiderman was arrested for speeding. It later transpired he was on his way to a fancy-dress party. Nothing so frivolous for Batman, however, who's been tackling crime in Germany. Precisely why he abandoned Gotham City in favour of Munich is uncertain, but over the past few months German police have arrived at numerous crime scenes only to find Batman there already. "It was amazing," admitted one officer. "Robberies, accidents, speeding offences he'd always be there first. I found myself daring to believe in him." During the course of his Munich sojourn, the superhero made over 20 arrests, and it was only when he crashed his Batmobile into a rubbish truck that it was discovered he wasn't Batman at all but 53-year-old software consultant Maurice Schnoppel, who had been listening into police signals on his CB radio. "It was fun," confessed Mr Schnoppel, "although not as much fun as when I was Catwoman."

Avoid the deadly intensive "Skoda bed" on Fridays

These are difficult times for hospitals. In Germany, a man went in for a routine appendix operation and came out minus his testicles. "It was a balls-up all round," chuckled one doctor. Still more disastrous were events in South Africa, where patients in one particular bed at the Free State Polononit Hospital always died on Friday morning. "There was no obvious reason for it," admitted one nurse. "We normally have an excellent recovery rate, but then suddenly people in this particular bed began dying, and always on Friday. Patients called it the Skoda bed, because once you got in you didn't stand a chance." Extensive investigations failed to throw any light on the matter, and the truth only emerged when a nurse happened to notice Friday-morning cleaner Gladys Mtembe unplugging the life-support machine attached to the bed so she could use the socket for her vacuum cleaner. "Thank God she didn't have a floor waxer as well," said one hospital official, "or we might have had an apocalypse on our hands."

Don't mess with the ordinance survey

Map alert! In Moscow, experts are creating a map so huge it will have every single house in Russia marked on it. In China, meanwhile, a man went berserk after the map he'd spent 10 years drawing was tendered obsolete by the construction of a public lavatory. Heng Su, 43, of Shenang, China, decided to map out his local village in the mid-Eighties, and spent the following decade constructing a chart so detailed it even included small mulberry bushes. Unfortunately, the day after he completed his masterpiece work began on the construction of a large public convenience in the middle of the village. Mr Su immediately confronted the workmen, informing them that the toilet couldn't be built because it would spoil his map. When they ignored him, however, he lost control, seizing a pickaxe and destroying 18 urinals whilst screaming, "Don't mess with the Ordinance Survey!" He is now recuperating in a secure hospital where he is working on a map of the world "that will be twice the size of the real thing".

Articles compiled by Paul Sussman in *The Big Issue*, London, England's street-sold magazine.

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QVC Voice 13

Modern day recycling

Dumpster diving

BY RON MURDOCH

With a keen eye, John gives all dumpsters a good looking over before going over the top. He pokes all bags with his stick to hear that tin rattling before opening the bag. "It's almost like Christmas year round, you never know what and when you'll find something," John says.

John used to work primarily in the cannery industry in Prince Rupert, but with the fishing business hit hard, he was laid off with hundreds of others. There used to be dozens of canneries lining the waterfront, now only about three operate and of them is planning to close soon.

John lived for a stint in a "no tell" hotel, but things got out of hand with a crooked management and the less than elite clientele living there. Overdoses were a common occurrence. John got a chance for a rent free life on a boat at the dock, and he's been there awhile now. To raise cash he makes a daily run to collect bottles and cans. People living in other boats in the marina come over and give John their cans, adding on to his totals. How much does he make everyday? "I'll never admit to it," says John.

He has had two really significant finds in his career. A buddy called him once to say he was coming in from the Queen Charlotte Islands, would John like his cans? John hit the floor the next day when he was what his buddy had brought in. After two cab trips, he cleared \$187. Friends tip him off to good spots. Another time he was tipped off to a whole dump of bottles and cans that took him three days to sort and cash in.

John refuses to be labeled "down and out" or "down on his luck." "It's all a matter of attitude," he says. "Besides, I'm part of the recycling trend going on these days."

Dumpsters are just there. Seldom noticed, taken for granted by most. Many never give them a second thought except when the trash is taken out or when the garbage truck is heard making its rounds. But to a few people, dumpsters are a source of income because of the cans and bottles inside. Others look at dumpsters as treasure chests, full of artifacts. In 1987 I was able to furnish a one bedroom apartment, except for a bed and stereo, with what I found laying by dumpsters in the back alley. This included everything from a toilet brush to a kitchen table with chairs.

Not all dumpster divers look as if they "died last week." Nor do all "go over the top" and rummage around like king-sized rats. Most look presentable enough and are looking for some of the best bargain hunting around. Their motives may be necessity, thrift or creativity, but they poke around looking for that something extra.

Is it a sign of the times? Is society getting wasteful in its quest for material gain? Whether people are upgrading their possessions or it's just easier to get a new one when the old one is no longer appealing, the pile in the back alley keeps getting bigger. A fortune can be had in the back alley.

WORDS ON
THE STREET

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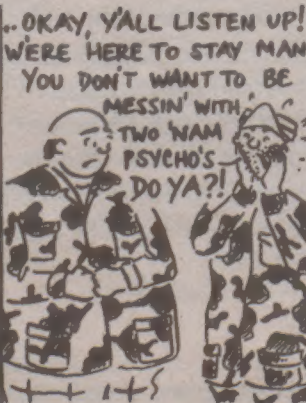
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BY JOHN
ZAPANTIS

Sundance, a well-known figure on the streets of Edmonton, sells **Our Voice** to supplement his disability pension. The money he makes helps with food, clothing "and to help my wife with her make-up," he jokes. He's a regular at the corner of the downtown public library where he and his partner Debbie often stand.

Sundance



Sundance came to Edmonton back in 1978 after a stint in Drumheller penitentiary, and he's lived here on the street and close to the streets ever since. He's struggled with alcohol, having gone through a number of treatment programs. During his stay at one treatment centre he met Debbie, and they've been together ever since.

Sundance has an extensive work background, the equivalent to a jack of all trades. He's worked on seismic crews, drilling rigs, at various mine sites, as a 3rd year electrician, carpenter, cement worker and heavy equipment operator. His first job was a four year term with the Armed Forces. He was born in Inuvik where Sundance's father was a Gwchin Chief and worked for the Armed Forces. But after his term, lonely and missing home, Sundance left the Forces. His work life came to an abrupt end, however, when he put his hand through a window, pulling out three ligaments and tearing out two nerves in his arm. His right hand was 95 per cent disabled.

Drinking and solvent abuse have long been problems for Sundance. When he was only 12 he experimented with nail polish remover. He knocked himself right out in front of his sister, who rushed him to a hospital. He was in a coma for three months. Miraculously he came back to life. He has a word of advice to those who would try solvents: "It may make you high and keep you in a mellow mood. But it's dangerous and I'd advise that no one use it."

Selling **Our Voice** has been a positive experience for Sundance, but he has been exposed to some unfriendliness as well. "One guy told me: I see you standing there all the time, why don't you just build yourself a teepee and sleep there too."

Being published as a poet has been a high point. Sundance's poem, *Deadly Street*, was a winner in the Songs of the Street poetry contest, and published in the poetry book that is currently sold on the streets by vendors.

Sundance has a rather down to earth and optimistic outlook on how he'd like to live his life with the woman of his dreams. "My future is with Debbie," says Sundance. "She's planning on getting a job. I want to go through to find out if there's a chance if I could either do something with my hand, or try to train for something else, because I don't want to be on AISH the rest of my life."



VENDOR Profile

**Our
Voice
Authorized
Vendor**



V
E
N
D
O
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Vendor Name _____
Number _____
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OUR VOICE VENDOR'S CODE

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HOMELESS IN CALGARY

Thousands of mothers in crisis are looking for help
—Report from 1996

Our Voice
the spare change magazine
October '97

971 families
(38 per cent) were
absolutely homeless

BY OUR VOICE STAFF

"No income at all"; that's what nearly one quarter of women-headed households said when they registered with Connection Housing, a Calgary agency in 1996. Over half of the 2,587 households who registered had a monthly income of less than \$700.

These are just two of the significant statistics included in a report of women and homelessness in Calgary, prepared by Connection Housing & Family Care Centre based on its own data for 1996.

"We have always viewed the \$700 mark as a turning point for families," says Susanna Koczur, the social agency's Executive Director. "Above that figure and they seem to be able to get by for a month or two. But when they drop below that figure they are generally in significant distress."

Connection Housing has for some time suggested the problem of homelessness among families, and particularly among women-headed households, is expanding in Calgary. The study was commissioned by Status of Women Canada.

The study found shocking results. Of the 2,587 women-headed households in a housing crisis, 971 (38 per cent) were



absolutely homeless. The study makes a distinction between relative and absolute homelessness. Absolute homelessness means you do not have your own shelter; you stay in emergency shelters, public buildings, alleys, parks and make-shift shelters. Relative homelessness means you do not have safe, secure, appropriate housing which is affordable. You may be living with friends or relatives, in an overcrowded unit or an illegal suite. You are paying more than 30 per cent of your total income on housing.

The key stumbling block to finding and maintaining a home, for both the relative and absolute homeless, is affordability. The majority of these households simply cannot afford rental accommodations and require help to do so.

The largest unmet 'need' of these households is the availability of food, followed by clothing and furnishings. Absolute homeless households represented 37.5 per cent of the people in the survey but 61.7 per cent of those surveyed had unrealized basic needs. That finding takes on heightened meaning when you consider that 2,775 children live in these households.

"The lives of these children are very difficult," says Susanna Koczur. "They often don't get the meals they should, they move around a lot, change friends and schools a lot. Children thrive on stability and consistency, while many of these children live with uncertainty as a best case scenario and fear as a worst case."

Absolute homeless women-headed households that came to Connection Housing for help depend on the support of family and friends to a greater degree than social services. Aboriginal peoples made up 24 per cent of the households in this study while overall they comprise only 2.6 per cent of the population of Alberta. The report recommends a review of the level of government support received by these households, keeping in mind the importance of reducing the monthly cost of housing to 30 per cent or less of their monthly incomes.

The report recommends further study into the relationship between poverty and homelessness and a variety of social factors such as: ethnic background, mental health or physical handicaps, lack of education, and marital status.

"We need a more complete sense of the causes of the problem. We need to know if and/or how a number of things taken together result in poverty," Ms. Koczur says.

A section of the report is the result of a round table of women who have experienced homelessness and poverty first-hand. They talked of a number of issues including housing, social services, their children, social supports or lack of same, family violence and the fear an anger that is part of the homeless lifestyle for many people.

"I feel such guilt for being poor. You're told it's all your fault," said one round table participant.

Over 12,000 registered for help

4,845 households representing 12,599 people registered with Connection Housing from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 1996

Of those households, 2,995 (70.3%) had one or two parents and children.

2,587 of these households were registered by women in a housing crisis who 'represented' their households.

971 (38%) of these households registered as being absolute homeless.

Talking Back

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